

Paddle Talk

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Working to move Up?

Earl Schalin

The Board and the Ratings Committee are currently reviewing the rating process to make it better for next year. One of the issues that the Rating Committee kept confronting was players thinking they were ready to be moved up before they actually were ready. There seems to be this concept that being able to hit the pickleball really hard is the primary criteria for being moved up. This is not so.

Here is a good starting point when you think you are ready to move up. I am sure you have all heard talk about focusing on the basics and that is exactly what we intend to do. So, let's start thinking about the place to start. Many of us start by doing it this way: I want to play some pickleball so I will sign up for a court. Then, I will take my paddle to the court to do battle against an opponent. And here's the mistake! You do not go onto the court to do battle with an opponent. You and your partner do battle. So how do you and your doubles partner become an instant team?

A great place to start is by talking to your partner by saying things like yours, mine, good set up, and anything else that causes you and your partner to communicate as a team. The more you talk to each other the better. If you are not doing this, then you are

just two people playing singles on the same side of the pickleball court! This will help you and your partner to become a more effective doubles team.

Your primary role should be to set up your partner. You can start this process by picking a target for your first shot and then for every shot thereafter. A target means a specific area, not a small spot, but an area where it will be tough for your opponents to make an offensive return. When this is your focus, hitting the ball harder and harder will not seem as important as it once did. You are now hitting a positive shot.

When you manage shot placement, then you can start working on court position, footwork, shoulder turning, and body turning. Only after being able to do all these things, will you be ready to think about moving up. If you are a more talented player and you're already doing all this, then you can start thinking about other things like developing a serving rhythm that involves muscle memory. Consistency! It's about making good shots every time. It's **not** about making a hard shot. It's about placing the ball consistently where you want it to go. It's about playing **real** pickleball.

Coaches Corner



Return of Serve

Returning the serve is partially establishing who is going to control the play. Never try for a pure winner. Do not make an unforced error. The main goal is to return the serve deep to keep the serving team at the baseline; power is not as important as control. A short return brings the serving team forward, allowing them to reach the NVZ line and negating the receiving team's advantage. Make your target spot five feet from the baseline and eight inches to left of center. This will keep the ball closer to the backhand of the player whose backhand is toward the middle of the court. The ball will travel over the low part of the net and give you a lot of leeway. Hit the ball slow to give you plenty of time to set up at the no volley zone line. Follow through, move to the NVZ line and return to the ready position to be set to return the next shot.

The preferred service return stroke is a forehand with a backswing and follow through, stepping forward to meet the ball in front of the body. This allows the receiver to quickly move toward the net by following the natural momentum of the follow through. Place the return down the middle, slightly closer to the back hand player. Both opponents may think the other will take the shot. A shot lofted deep to the opponent's backhand gives the receiver time to reach the NVZ line and keep the serving team back. Once you have developed confidence in your ability to hit deep to the center of the court, aim closer to the lines. Remember, there will be times when you and your partner want to [focus on returning the ball to one opponent](#). So it is important to be able to direct the ball to either player at will.

Wait for the serve 12" or more behind the baseline so that the ball will bounce in front of you. There are two reasons for this: (1) The ball must land in front of you not at your feet. and (2) It will be easier to see if your opponents return is going to be out. If your opponent has a very fast and deep serve, you may have to wait about 3 feet behind baseline. If your opponent has the ability to hit a drop shot, be prepared to quickly run forward.

Have a mental note in your mind of players who do hit soft, short serves. Watch the face of the server's paddle and be ready to sprint in and split your feet for the short return.

If one opponent is weaker than the other, hit the return to weakest opponent's backhand until you get ahead a few points.

When the better of your two opponents least expects it, hit a shot to him deep to his backhand. The element of surprise can help.

When your shot is returned, try to place a soft shot in the no volley zone. Do not try to overpower your opponent with a very fast passing shot, unless you are an advanced player and you feel you can win more than 80% of points in this manner. Both opponents are already at net, and it would be a very low percentage shot. A low soft shot is important because it gives you time to get to the net and not be on the defensive. More points are won when returning serve because the first team that gets to the net usually wins the point. Watch the ball. If you realize you can't make it all the way to the NVZ line before the ball is hit by the opponent, stop and assume the ready position. Return the ball, then continue to the NVZ line. Stop again if necessary. In tennis this is often referred to as the "split step."

Good luck....



Eye on....

Stretching: Helping to Avoid Injuries

Pickleball may be relatively low impact, but as a sport with repetitive movements, it still puts strain on the body that can lead to injuries. Unlike a lot of sports, pickleball demands more from a player's dominant side – their paddle hand side – resulting in repetitive misalignment that can put uneven wear and tear on that side of the body.

Dynamic stretching is the use of movement to stretch muscles before a workout or athletic competition. It relies on momentum to engage the muscles, rather than holding a stretch at a standstill. These stretches are generally used to prevent muscle strain and to safely allow for swift, powerful movements. Movements are designed to prepare the muscles for sudden movements by slightly raising the body temperature. The warmer body temperature usually makes the body better able to handle sudden movement than a cooler, unprepared body.

The stretching routines are thought to have both short- and long-term effects. By stretching out muscles through

movements similar to ones that occur during athletic competition, the body may become used to the movements and less likely to become injured. As a player's body gets used to the movements, it may not take as much effort to perform the movements during competition and come more naturally. Dynamic stretching is useful before competition and has been shown to reduce muscle tightness. Muscle tightness is one factor associated with an increase occurrence of tears.

Dynamic stretching is able to accomplish many things. It is able to increase blood flow, increase the range of motion, increase your awareness of your joint position, and improve your athletic performance. If these are performed correctly, you should still feel a nice stretch but you should also feel your heart rate gently start to rise as the blood flow is beginning to increase to all parts of the body and be ready to play a great game of pickleball! Below is a chart of some simple warmup stretches you can begin before your game.

Stretching Exercises



1. Neck Flexion/Extension Stretch
(forward, then back)



2. Neck Lateral Flexion Stretch
(one side, then the other)



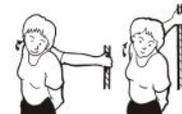
3. Latissimus Dorsi and Posterior Deltoid Stretch
(link hands, push elbows together)



4. Triceps Stretch
(pull elbow across and down)



5. Shoulder Rotator Stretch
(using towel, pull up with the top arm then down with the other)



6. Pectoral Stretch at 90° and 120°
(use a doorway or post)



7. Bicep Stretch
(hands apart)



8. Supraspinatus Stretch
(keep elbow parallel to ground)



9. Wrist Extensor Stretch
(tilt head to opposite side, keep elbow straight)



10. Thoracic Extension Stretch
(reach forward with arms, push chest towards floor, arch back down, backside behind knees)



11. Lateral Flexion Stretch
(one side, then the other, push pelvis across as you bend)



12. Lumbar Extension and Abdominal Stretch
(be gentle if sore)



Your Journey to Pickleball Sarah Ansboury

We begin with the understanding that this is **your journey**. It is wholly yours. As unique as you are. It is a journey, process or path. It is not a destination, a ranking or a gold medal.

But unlike some journeys, no special ticket (i.e. athletic ability) is required. It can be achieved even though some will start later in life. It is available to anyone: male or female, young or old.

And though we may have difficulty defining **pickleball mastery**, we know it when we see it. We believe it will bring us joy. Because throughout our lives we have taken on new challenges. As a child, we may have learned how to ride a bike. Perhaps we learned to play a new musical instrument, or pursued a professional education. And like learning anything new, there were moments when we said *"I got it"*. And those moments were often followed by exclaiming, *"Oh no, I don't."*

Learning pickleball is a perfect metaphor for this. Let's follow Sally as she takes up pickleball.

Sally is in reasonably good shape, but never played any organized sports growing up. She decided to take up pickleball and found a qualified instructor. Her instructor shows her the proper grip, and demonstrated the correct way to hit a dink. She tossed the ball softly to Sally and after a few tries she made contact. Her dinks weren't very controlled. Sometimes they went over the instructor's head, and some didn't clear the net. She felt clumsy and a bit embarrassed. "My gosh, she is only a few feet away," Sally thought. "It's not like the paddle is heavy. And she is tossing it to

the same spot every time. This should be easy. I thought people said pickleball was fun and great exercise. This isn't any fun, and I'm not even breaking a sweat."

But her instructor continued to encourage Sally. "Keep your wrist firm." "Watch the ball hit the paddle." And with time, if Sally concentrated on each and every motion, she was able to hit the ball as she intended.

After some time, she got it! In fact, she could hit the ball back every single time. Someone inside your head said, "This is so easy". But Sally quickly learned it was not.

"Now let's add some movement", her coach suggested. She returned the ball with her paddle now, no longer tossing it to the exact same spot. Now Sally had to move to get the ball. Sometimes left, sometime right. She even had to step forward and back. Again she felt clumsy and embarrassed. Suddenly Sally couldn't dink as well as she had just a few minutes ago. It was as if she forgot everything she just learned; but just before she was ready to scream, she stopped getting worse. But she wasn't getting better!

She plateaued. This plateau thing was nearly as bad as the getting worse part. "Geez, Jenny said this was an easy sport to learn." And everyone said it was "so social". "How I am going to be social, if I have to think about every shot?", she pondered.

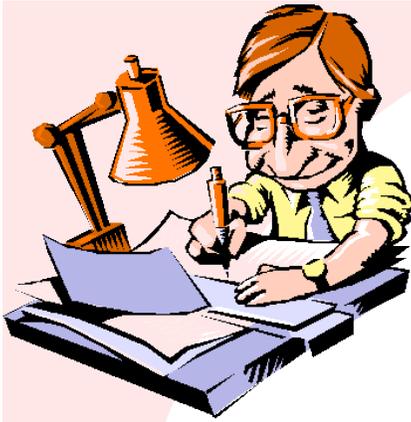
And even as she worked through this plateau, Sally realized there would likely be another and another. There

were other shots to learn. And since most everyone played doubles, she would be expected to move with a partner. "Am I ever going to be good at this?", she wondered.

Sally was faced with a decision. Did she go back and hang out with the folks that played just like her, or did she want to continue **her journey**. Was she willing to be frustrated? Did she want to put in the time? Exactly how uncomfortable and embarrassed was she willing to be? Frankly, this is a decision you too have had to make many times in your life. Every time you had an opportunity to learn, develop and change you have faced this same decision. It seems we have relatively brief spurts of progress, followed by a slight decline before we plateau. Because to become competent and comfortable it needs to become second nature. We have to move from *consciously competent* to *unconsciously competent*. It takes time, guidance and practice to develop a new habit. When our mind and body are working together effortlessly: It's fun! It's effective. It's mastery!

I believe that the spurt you view as improvement, is not a moment in time. In fact it was happening all along the way. Mastery is not the destination, that moment of improvement, it is the journey through all the phases that led to that moment. Mastery occurred when you practiced not to improve, but for the sake of practice itself.

Mastery occurred when you enjoy the practice as much as the medal.



From the Editor's Desk

"Come gather around people, wherever you roam. And admit that the waters around you have grown." Prophetic words from long ago but still valid today. As the summer

heat descends on us and we say "see you" to so many friends, perhaps we should all step back and reflect on where we have been and where we are going. A time for reflection and committed direction.

This year has seen many positive things—more involvement by several people and more active participation by some. Is that enough? This coming year brings many

opportunities and challenges. How are we going to respond to them? The club needs all of its members to come forth and be active. We are looking at many new programs in the coming year, programs that should benefit all of us. What do you think we should do? Speak your mind, do your deeds, for now is the time. A group is only as good as its individuals. Are you going to help us grow? Everyone can join in and contribute in their own way. Why wait, participate! The rewards, the fun, and friends are at the gate. Come grow with us as we march in the waters around.

Finally, listen to the words of a wise man from Minnesota in another era, "Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall. For he that gets hurt will be he who has stalled."

March Madness Plays on Pickleball Courts!

By Peggy Martin

In honor of the NCAA Basketball Tourney, and especially the NCAA Final Four game here in the Valley, the Sun Lakes Pickleball Club Cottonwood (SLPCC) held its annual March Madness Tourney on Monday, March 27, 2017. Player teams were organized much like the qualifying basketball tournaments held around the country... East, West, Midwest and South... but with our own pickleball twist! Players rated 2.0 played in the East Division; 2.5 rated players played for the West Division; 3.0 rated players played in the Midwest Division and 3.5 players played in the South Division.

The tournament drew 82 players divided into 41 two-person teams. Teams were formed in a blind draw... not by player name... but by college name in each division per the above rating system. For example, in the West Division (2.5 rated players), Gonzaga played Xavier for the West championship. Gene Nelson and Terry Gaube played for Gonzaga and Susie Miller and July Kolman played for Xavier. And just like the big boys and girls, one loss and you were done! In our tournament however, "one and done" meant go directly to the refreshment table! With many thanks to our terrific SLPCC members

who brought refreshments to fuel the teams!

Winners and schools they played for are as follows:

East Division: Florida and South Carolina played for the championship. Tim Donovan and MaryAnn Hall won for the University of Florida.

West Division: Gonzaga and Xavier played for the championship. Susie Miller and Judy Kolman won for Xavier.

Midwest Division: Purdue and Oregon played for the championship. Bev Bryce and Lou Schmutz won for Purdue.

South Division: Texas Southern and UCLA played for the championship. Karen and Scott Hickman won for Texas Southern.

The annual March Madness pickleball tournament is a great social event on SLPCC's calendar. Anyone who belongs to the SLPCC club is welcome to play in the tournament. If you weren't able to play this year, because you watched every NCAA basketball game possible... think about playing next year! You just might play pickleball for your favorite NCAA team!

Heard on the Court

Peggy Martin



Ginny N is a member of the Risen Savior Quilting Group we're told, sewing hand-made quilts for charities. Members of her quilting group have taken their quilts on international mercy missions as well, providing children with a lovely warm quilt. Ginny says that over half of the quilts her group makes are from scrap materials and are given to the Salvation Army. The group also sells a number of quilts to raise funds for other materials used in quilt making. KUDOS to Ginny and the Risen Savior Quilting Group for being such good community neighbors!

According to Peggy M, her 13-year old granddaughter, Samantha, is tied for first place... wait for it... in Terminator Blocks Clutches and Accessories at SCEDA! Huh!! Now... let's translate into everyday English! Samantha is a junior drag racer and a member of the Southern California Drag Racing Association(SCEDA). This is only her second year of drag racing, and she is definitely hanging with the big boys at 80mph on a quarter mile track! She's a pretty mean Pickleball player too says Peggy. You can't beat her and brother, Nick, age 12, at table tennis! They're champs!

Paddy N just completed a terrific women's golf season at Palo Verde and Cottonwood! Paddy won the women's 2017 club championship at Palo Verde and also won low-gross score for both Palo Verde and Cottonwood! These amazing wins have qualified her to play in the Arizona state women golf medallion tournament in January 2018. Heard on the Court will let you know when we know more about this prestigious tournament. Congratulations, Paddy!

Terry G is a Golf Rules Official for Golf Saskatchewan and Golf Canada. Terry is nationally certified and we are not going to question her expertise! We gave her the answer to a rules of golf question from a recent Sunday night trivia game at Palo Verde, and she knew the question! Terry not only plays Pickleball, golf and trivia... she obviously plays Jeopardy too! For those who are way too curious, the answer was "five minutes." Think about that... and check the last page of Paddle Talk for the question!

Mike S, a Medicare insurance broker when he's not playing Pickleball and competitive bridge, reminded us that every day in this country, 10,000 people are turning 65... and for the next ten years! Something to really think

about here! You know, another reason why SLPCC just might need a few more Pickleball courts!

If you hear something fun and interesting about our SLPCC members, let *Heard on the Court* know. We think it's a great way to learn more about our very accomplished Pickleball players and their families!



Behind the Scenes.....

The Making of a Tournament

Planning has already begun for the 5th Annual Norris Invitational Tournament, which will be held at the Cottonwood Pickleball Courts on March 5-9, 2018. This year's Tournament Directors, Dave Zapatka and JoAnn Zapatka, have agreed to do the same in 2018. As with any major undertaking, **lots** of volunteers are necessary to ensure a successful event!

The primary responsibility of the Tournament Director is in coordinating the players' scheduled playing time and seeing that the games operate smoothly. This is a complicated process which requires the coordination of many people other than simply players.

After the Tournament Director and Event Coordinator select a date, a major effort must be made to publicize the tournament. Decisions and Information must be established regarding: playing dates, the levels of competition, the cost and procedure of entering the tournament, cancellation procedures, waiver forms, rules of play, the format of the games, the main contact person, what food and beverage service will be available, and the necessary partner matching service, if needed. After this decision process is completed then the primary key to success must be implemented; **Promotion**.

Good promotion is an ongoing process. Articles must be generated for use not only in our communities' papers but we must use other media such as the television station, bulletin boards and the internet. A massive undertaking with potential massive results!

Once the advanced promotion system begins functioning, more of the behind the scenes work begins taking place. Teams must be established to complete a multitude of tasks, before, during and after the tournament. The tasks include, but not limited to: food service, acquiring daily supplies needed, ensuring proper daily venue setup, daily cleanup is completed, referees are prepared for court games, each court is prepared for the days activities, punctually posting of the results of each game, and scor-

ing sheets are properly marked. These are simply some of the tasks which must be completed daily.

While these activities are processing, the Tournament Director begins his main job—formatting the playing to ensure an efficient operation. The Director must consider budgeted daily playing times and what court scheduling best accomplishes this. Players prefer to know in advance as to what the players brackets are. Accomplishing this requires registration assistance. **Earlier** registration provides more time to consider the composition of competitive brackets. The Director's responsibilities include ensuring correct bracket assignments, confirmation of reported ratings and then sending this information to assistants for aid in the seeding process. This process attempts to provide competitive matches for both players and viewers.

The 2018 Norris Invitational Tournament will be the club's 5th Anniversary of this event. If we are to make this the event we all want it to be, it will take ALL of us to join together and make it happen. This not only means playing in the tournament but also working in it to make it successful. This article has attempted to demonstrate briefly the massive amount of work required to make this happen. So, as a member of the host organization, we are asking you to help. You may indicate your willingness to do this by contacting Irene at: slpccpresident@gmail.com or to editor85248@gmail.com. Thanks for your consideration!



ANTICIPATION

Pickleball is a very quick game requiring fast reflexes for those quick exchanges at the no-volley line. The best players give themselves an edge of just a fraction of a second by anticipating the shot. If you wait for your eyes to pick up the flight of the ball after it is struck, it may be too late. It is important to take note of the visual clues that will tell you where the ball is most likely to go. Observe the speed and angle of the paddle as the ball is struck so that you can begin to react and shift your weight before the ball is actually hit. Also take note of the position of the feet for another visual clue of the general direction in which your opponent is aiming. You don't need to look directly at the feet. You can usually see the feet in your peripheral vision as you keep your eyes on the paddle and ball. An important step is to recognize that tracking the ball with your paddle is important in anticipating a pickleball opponent's shot

Watching the paddle will also help you anticipate any spin that is being placed on the ball. If the paddle is moving from high to low, then the ball will likely have backspin. That is especially true if it is hit with an open face (paddle tilted slightly upward). If the paddle is moving from low to high across the top of the ball with a closed face, it will have top spin. If the paddle is swept horizontally

across the body, it will probably have some side spin.

As you are anticipating the speed and trajectory of the ball in order to get in position to hit it, it just as important to anticipate that the ball will go out so that you can get out of way. Watch how often the best players get free points by simply stepping aside or ducking to watch the ball sail out of bounds. You can also anticipate human nature. If your opponent has blasted the ball at you as hard as he can hit it and you return it, it is likely that he will try to hit it even harder the next time. Anticipate that and be prepared to step aside and collect that free point as you watch the ball go beyond the baseline. If you don't anticipate the out ball, then you will probably be hitting many balls that would have gone out. Try to anticipate when your opponents are about to hit an out of bound balls. Know when to expect an out of bounds ball before your opponents even touch the ball.

Hitting your opponents out balls builds confidence in your opponents and a good player will make an adjustment after realizing he has just hit an out ball. You will probably lose future points without him being penalized for hitting an out ball. If you should play someone who always tries to hit everything, even your out balls then hit at that person much faster than you normally would. You

have nothing to lose. Be aware of where you are on the court at all times. This will help you to decide whether to hit or not to hit a ball. If you stop hitting your opponents out balls your percentage of wins will rise immediately.

Things to take into consideration when anticipating an out ball from your opponent.

1. Is the wind at your opponents back?
2. Is your opponent swinging real fast at the ball and is his contact point below net?
3. Is your opponent making a difficult shot on the full gallop?
4. Are they a very inconsistent player?
5. Is it a very hard and low percentage shot for you to try and return? If so let it go. It may go out.

